

Frequently Asked Questions
Learn and Serve School Base Technical Session on May 13, 20, and 27 2004

Q: At the time when you submit the application, do you have to have a project already planned by the youth, and who decides how to do the project?

A: You may propose an outline or a plan for a project; however, we would recommend that the details of the project be left to the youth. Your proposal can simply give us the vision for the project and your plans for how and when youth will be involved in developing the project.

Q: Do we have to collaborate with colleges and universities if we receive this funding?

A: No. You must partner with another community organization or school. A college or university could be a partner.

Q: What is meant by geographic diversity?

A: In case of a large number of great proposals, we will try to fund programs in different parts of the district in order to provide services to diverse communities.

Q: How many students would be considered a class?

A: You may define class as your school does. Classes in your school may be 12 or 22. It is up to you, your school, and the way you create your proposal.

Q: Would you describe in more detail the match requirements?

A: Match is the amount of money, in cash or in kind, that your school or organization provides toward this project. We will only fund up to 90% of the cost of your project. Your 10% may be in the form of cash or in-kind such as supplies, salaries, or training. Please read the guidelines carefully.

Q: Is the 150 students over 3 years or is that a goal for year one?

A: The numbers in all the grant objectives that you have or have read, refer to the cumulative numbers that Serve DC must report to the Corporation for National and Community Service. Actual project numbers should be realistic for your own project.

Q: Materials? Was there a category for materials and operating cost?

A: Yes, Part II of the budget gives you a broad category of "operating cost". Here you can explain what materials, supplies, or travel costs you need in order to carry out your project.

Q: Is the match 10% per category or does it apply to the overall budget?

A: 10% match is for the overall budget.

Q: Are there sample applications on the website that we could model our proposals?

A: This is the first year we manage this grant. We do not have any sample applications.

Q: What are the criteria for a fiscal agent?

A: For this grant, the fiscal agent must be a school (public, charter, private, or independent). They must have capacity to manage a federal grant.

Q: If we developed a draft of our proposal, could someone from your staff review it before it was submitted?

A: No. We follow federal and district grant review process that does not allow our office to help you in the development of the grant beyond the training and technical assistance workshops.

Q: Where will the national service learning conference be held next year?

A: The National Service Learning Conference will be held in Long Beach, California next March.

Q: What is the difference between Community Based and School Based Learn and Serve grants?

A: Our community based program is offered to community-based organizations that are 501c3 nonprofit, local or national. These programs usually operate after school and during the summer. The school-based grants are available to schools and are meant to operate during the school day. Although we manage both programs, at this time only school based grants are open for competition.

Q: What if the community based organization has filed for 501c3 status with the IRS, but are not yet official. Do they count?

A: For the purposes of explanation only since at this time we do not have grants available for community based organizations, a grantee cannot receive federal funds unless they have 501c3 status at the time of the award.

Q: What is the funding level for community based grants and is it different than school based grants?

A: Yes, at this time due to funding from the Corporation for National and Community Service, we offer community based grants up to \$20,000 and school based grants up to \$12,000.

Q: When does our funding year begin?

A: August 1, 2004 through July 31, 2005.

Q: The budget is a 12 month budget, but the program can only be during the school day. So are you expecting a 9 month budget?

A: No, we recommend a 9 month school day program combined with a summer component so that the project operates for the full 12 months.

Q: What can you use the funds for materials and staff?

A: You can use the funds for operating the project. That may include materials, transportation for students and costs associated with inviting other students to the project, fees, and supplies. You may also use the funds to supplement a teacher's salary, or offer stipends for hours above and beyond regular hours.

Q: Is there a 1099 issue to the teacher or the school for these funds?

A: It would be up to the school or school district how to organize the funds to pay for salary. Serve DC will only need documentation to show how it was spent.

Q: How specific do you need to be in the application for identifying a Program Director? Do you need a specific name and resume?

A: If you know who the person is, yes, we would like to know how and why this person is qualified. If you have not recruited for the position yet, just give us information about the type of person you will select.

Q: Should we focus more on the needs of the community or the needs of the students?

A: Both. The project should be a learning opportunity for the students and a strengthening opportunity for the community.

Q: What is a hot spot?

A: Through the police department and Mayor's office, there are designated boundaries of neighborhoods that for various reasons need extra support. The maps are available on our website www.serve.dc.gov
In this proposal, if you are in or within 3 blocks of a hot spot, you will receive bonus credit in the review and selection process.

Q: Which needs to be in or near the hot spot, the school, the student's residence or the project?

A: The project must operate and the activities must take place within the hot spot or within three blocks.

Q: In terms of your partners, do they have to be community-based, meaning local?

A: Community based may mean a local grass roots organization or an affiliate of a national organization that operates locally.

Q: If you are working with a group of children but they have not been identified yet b/c they are not yet in the class, how can we identify the children to identify need in the community and plan the project?

A: You do not need to list specific children, but rather detail the process you will use to identify the need and who will be involved in planning the project.

Q: What if your school does not require a certain number of hours of service?

A: If your school does not have system in place to track student's service hours, you do not need to meet this requirement. However, if this project will create one, tell us about it.

Q: Is the training for Project Coordinators really a three-day training?

A: No, the 3 day training was written in as the original thought, however, we realize that this is not realistic for teachers; therefore, the trainings will be scheduled based on the needs and availability of the sub-grantees once they are identified.

Q: Can the eligible expense for summer training be a social outing?

A: If you can demonstrate that the event or the outing is training then it is allowable.

Q: Can we build on a current partnership, or do we need to develop a new partnership?

A: Definitely build on current relationships. Be sure to include this info in the application. If you have thoughts about future partnerships, let us know in your proposal.

Q: Can one institution have multiple grants?

A: Yes, if the fiscal agent is the same but different projects are proposed, although they will compete against each other in the grant review process, they can and may be multiple projects proposed by one legal applicant.

Q: How many students would you recommend?

A: You should propose a number that fits with your objectives; however we would recommend no less than a classroom. If a classroom for you is 12 or 24, use the number that is determined in your school.

Q: Is it better to have teacher at the school and not an administrator?

A: Yes, your project coordinator should be someone that will work directly with the students. If you choose someone other than a teacher, explain why they are an appropriate person for your project.

Q: Will new applicants be eligible for the grant next year? Will the 3-year cycle apply to new grantees next year?

A: No, we expect to award all of our available funds in this competition. Therefore, next year, current sub-grantees will apply for continuation but unless someone leaves the program, Serve DC will not have new funds

for another open competition for new applicants next year. However, Serve DC may have funds available for other types of grants.

Q: Should our application discuss goals and activities for all 3 years or just the first year?

A: The first year only.

Q: Who should I email with questions?

A: Lucila Lagace at lucila.lagace@dc.gov or John Savage at john.savage@dc.gov

Q: Have you looked at requirements for DCPS and hurdles they need to address using adult volunteers, including: TB test, police clearance, criminal history, etc?

A: There is a line item in the budget sheet for expenses associated with recruiting and retaining adult volunteers. If you need them, include it in the budget.

Q: Would you use the adult volunteers for in the school or outside the school at the project?

A: Both. You should propose the configuration that works best for your project.

Q: What is the process for proposal selection? Do the applicants have the chance to present before a panel or board?

A: As of now there has been no need for a face-to-face meeting with the selection committee or the commissioners. The selection process is managed by Serve DC staff; however the grant review and recommendations for funding are made by a peer review committee made up of independent reviewers who volunteer their time to review the proposals. Final recommendations for funding are presented to the commissioners who vote on the awards at their meeting. It could be that a commissioner or reviewer needs to request a meeting with an applicant; however it has not happened before and is not part of the formal process.

Q: Is there a list of Serve DC's board members?

A: It is on www.serve.dc.gov under "About Us"

Q: Do we need to include costs for trainings Serve DC covers?

A: You do not need to include the cost of the training; however you will need to include the cost of transportation, parking, and possibly meals.

Q: If you can't help us with writing the grant, is there anyone who can?

A: The Mayor's office operates the Office of Partnerships and Grant Development. They offer general assistance on grant writing and resources development. You can find them at www.opgd.dc.gov or 202-727-8900

Q: If you show more match than 10%, does it help?

A: Yes. You must provide a minimum of 10% but you should account for your actual matching amounts even if that is above the minimum.

Q: You want us to assess the value of adult volunteers for in-kind?

A: No, you may not use volunteer time as in-kind. The line item in the budget is for you to request costs associated with recruiting and retaining adult volunteers.

Q: To what extent are we going to need to provide a schedule, documentation for our time?

A: Keep track and documentation on everything. We adhere to same standards of all federal grants. You must keep documentation of time and activity for anyone charged to the grant, separate and apart for what you keep for payroll.

Q: We deal with a complicated procurement system; can we do a purchase order for our share?

A: Yes. Internally you will need to work with your system. We reimburse for actual costs incurred and requested in a request for reimbursement.

Q: If you get someone who is a specialist in something to perform a service for you that they would normally charge for would that be considered in-kind and part of the match?

A: Very gray area between someone volunteering and donating in-kind services. Would lean toward not counting that, but if you do, provide very clear distinction in writing.

Q: Can we get an advance on payment because we may not have the money in time since it takes awhile to go through the DCPS process?

A: If the circumstances warrant it, we may be able to provide an advance on payment.

Q: When will we know if we were awarded?

A: We will announce grant recipients on the 3rd or 4th week of June.

Q: Do you have to include a budget narrative?

A: No, just please be as specific as possible in the line items.

Q: Is it possible to have two people working on the grant, one with high-school students and one with elementary school students?

A: Yes.